

BEFORE
THE PUBLIC SERVICE COMMISSION OF
SOUTH CAROLINA
DOCKET NO. 2004-264-C - ORDER NO. 2004-534
OCTOBER 27, 2004

IN RE: Extended Area Service (EAS) Local Calling)
Between Cheraw and Bennettsville)
)
)

ORDER ADDRESSING
CHERAW-BENNETTSVILLE
EAS

This matter comes before the Public Service Commission of South Carolina (the Commission) for discussion of the Extended Area Calling (EAS)(or local calling) proposal between the Cheraw and Bennettsville exchanges. This Commission had previously requested community of interest studies for the Cheraw to Bennettsville (one way and two way non-optional) calling. For one way EAS for Cheraw to Bennettsville, the monthly per line additive for customer would be \$1.29, with a one time charge of \$.99 per line charge to cover balloting. For two way EAS for Bennettsville to/from Cheraw, the monthly per line additive for customers in each exchange would be \$1.44, with a one-time charge of \$.98 per line charge to cover balloting. The community of interest appears to be relatively limited under the studies.

In its letter to the Commission's Executive Director of June 30, 2004, BellSouth Telecommunications, Inc. (BellSouth) notes that some years ago, EAS studies were numerous. However, when the total customer body in the relevant exchanges were balloted, they often rejected the monthly increase in rates. As an alternative, the local exchange companies developed area-calling products (called Area Plus by BellSouth). According to

BellSouth, these products provided reasonably priced flat-rate alternatives to those customers who placed the majority of the calls to the distant city. BellSouth notes that it is fundamentally fair that only the customers who call the distant city pay a higher rate, while all other customers have no increase in their monthly rate. Also of note, BellSouth states that there are many new long distance unlimited calling plans now available from both wireless and wire line companies, including BellSouth that lessens the need for EAS.

We have considered this matter, and, due to the relatively limited community of interest as indicated by BellSouth's study and the results of prior balloting on this issue, this Commission is reluctant to ask BellSouth and the Commission Staff to expend the financial and personnel resources necessary to conduct a ballot on this proposal. However, this Commission does wish to see that every opportunity to provide desired services to these communities is used. Accordingly, we are requiring the parties to explore other options for providing expanded service between these two exchanges, such as, but not limited to, optional calling plans such as those mentioned in BellSouth's letter to this Commission. Further, we will delay a vote on this matter until such time as the other options have been explored and reported back to this Commission.

(SEAL)